



# CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

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## City Center Update January 2005

A staff team led by Elizabeth Friel, the City's General Manager for Development/Planning Director and Rick Goff, the Director of Economic Development, has been meeting since early November and working toward a product and process to adopt regulations for the City Center. Please see below a summary of the team's process to date. On 12/9/04, the City Center Task Force (CCTF) endorsed the Guiding Principles as shown below. The CCTF also supported the general direction of staff's work. Staff is continuing to finalize the tools to implement City Center and expects to begin the adoption process by City Council beginning in February 2005.

### **OVERALL GOALS:**

The staff had two primary goals for the tools that were to be created for City Center.

1. In general, any tool must implement the Guiding Principles (see below) The City Center must be a "Great Place", with a mix of uses, unique design and well designed density. The City Center must be sustainable development with opportunities for affordable housing. Finally, developers in the City Center should be offered incentives and partnership to develop in City Center.
2. Specifically, any tool must be based on the Comprehensive Plan; the best of the 2001 Streetworks plan, best planning practices, and be market based in its approach. The tool must clearly articulate form and function for the City Center. Public space, public art, and green development practices must be strongly encouraged.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES (DRAFT):**

- **Principle Number One, "Great Place"** The primary great place, the town common or "City Center", is the anchor of the City Center is located on the north side of Maple Avenue. It includes a few passive amenities and is flanked on each side by street-level retail including cafes and restaurants, theater, with office and residential uses above the first floor. The common is linked to off-street parking, other City Center blocks, and to the City's residential neighborhoods through a series of sidewalks and pedestrian walkways. The town common will be a center of everyday civic, social and recreational activity for residents of the City Center, City, and region, in addition to the patrons, visitors and customers of the commercial and entertainment venues. A secondary "great place" focal point, the "City Circle" is linked physically and visually to the town common and will be a more passive gathering area located on the south side of Maple Avenue. This area will likely include public art or water features, small performing arts space and/or small visitors center.
- **Principle Number Two, "Mixed Use"** The development program for the four-block area shall be mixed use. The uses may be mixed within blocks and/or within buildings. The types and mixes should reinforce and maximize the current market conditions, while at the same time follow location and layout criteria that

ensures their best chance to be successful. The City Center plan shall embrace mixed-use and pedestrian friendly design concepts to bring a vibrant, balanced and sustainable diversity of activities and land uses to the project area. The mix will include commercial office, retail, restaurants, cafes, theaters, art galleries, a hotel, recreational facilities, rental and owner-occupied housing, structured garage, street and surface parking, a town common, along with pedestrian walkways, sidewalks and alleyways, incorporating streetscape enhancements. The development program should further reinforce the principles of City Center and be viable over the long term. Each building should contain a predominant use, and every attempt must be made to have retail and restaurants around the perimeter of the town common. Stand-alone destination retail may anchor the major corners of the project area (along Broad Street). Commercial space is a high priority, and cannot generally be substituted for short-term residential opportunities without the target overall commercial ratios being maintained project wide. Residential uses should reflect market based product types for the upper floors, and should include housing products currently not available in this market such as live work units and loft condominiums.

- **Principle Number Three “Unique Design”** The creation of a significant public gathering place is only complete with adjacent private uses that create the “walls of space,” define the scale and character of the place, and activate the place with the people who live, work and shop there. To that end, the City has an expectation that the City Center design will be exemplary and unique, from the largest details such as building design and the integration of open space, to the relationship between the buildings, to the design of entryways from the parking areas, as well as the details of landscaping and signage. Critical to the success of the special space is to establish it as unique; that is, it will not be identical to other centers that are developing in the metropolitan area. Green building and low impact development principles should be included in the design of buildings and sites. Multiple architects are encouraged to participate in the design of individual buildings and development blocks; finally, the City Center shall be designed to be highly accessible by pedestrians, bicycles, and mass transit, creating a multi-modal transportation center.
- **Principle Number Four, “Well Designed Density”** The key to a successful place is people, lots of people, at all times of the day. However, it is important to recognize that the City shall not compromise its objectives regarding open space and design, with increased density and height. Therefore, the City will carefully calculate and evaluate density and height proposals so as to determine whether they conform or are in conflict with this objective.
- **Principle Number Five “Sustainable Development.”** The City Center development will be sustainable and create new revenue and economic development opportunities for the City. The City Center will not cause any unmitigated burden on City infrastructure.
- **Principle Number Six, “Affordable Housing.”** This is a highly valued principle and notwithstanding any negotiation on any other project, it is our expectation that the City Center project will meet the City’s established goals and policies relative to affordable housing.
- **Principle Number Seven, “Incentives and Partnership.”** The City and its designees are the owners of a number of prime parcels of land within the City Center development area. The City has a fiduciary duty to protect the public’s interest in transactions involving the land that it owns. That stated, the City intends to be flexible and creative in negotiating agreements involving the future ownership and uses of its land. Such agreements may take the form of title transfers through sales contracts, options to purchase, lease contracts, equity partnerships, property exchanges, and/or other deal structures that result in investment and projects consistent with the City Center plan. The City may utilize certain financing tools or special assessment mechanisms to support public infrastructure and improvements or to assist in the effective operation and maintenance of City Center.

## **PROCESS AND SCHEDULE:**

The staff team has been meeting and has completed the following:

- By 11/17 – Literature Reviewed and Preliminary Outlines Were Prepared – Each member of the team was assigned a Code or publication to review and come up with list of what needs to be in this type of Code and provide an analysis of the best practices and tools
- By 11/24 – Created First Drafts of Principals, Concept Plan, and Code
- By 12/1 – Review and Fine Tune First Drafts
- By 12/7 - Begin briefing CCTF, City Council, Planning Commission, EDA, and other Boards and Commissions
- By 12/23 – Begin vetting the plan with experts
- By 1/31 – Finalize tools and begin adoption process
  - Step 1 -- Council adopts City Center Guiding Principals and Concept Plan as Policy by February 2005
  - Step 2 --Adopt City Center Code by March 2005 –establish the basic parameters for City Center

For further information please contact Rick Goff at 703/248-5491 or Elizabeth Friel at 703/248-5040.